Getting Started with Core

Children's Treatment Network of Simcoe York
Augmentative Communication Consultation Services (ACCS)

WHAT is core vocabulary?

Core vocabulary are high frequency words that make up the most common words we use in daily conversation (e.g. I, you, want, help, go, etc.). Research shows that we only need about 400 core words to express 75% of our messages.

WHY use core vocabulary?

When introducing an Augmentative & Alternative Communication (AAC) system, the first vocabulary many people think of introducing are nouns (e.g. food, activities, people, etc.). Although, these are easier to represent with pictures, we actually use them less frequently. Therefore, introducing core vocabulary first is more powerful, because it can be used across environment/activity and gives individuals a much richer vocabulary.

HOW do I introduce core vocabulary?

Core vocabulary can be introduced using a variety of different tools (ie. Flip 'n Talk, Core Vocabulary display, Speech Generating Device, etc.). It is imperative that the vocabulary remains in the same location on the display, to make it easier to find. Imagine if the keys on your keyboard were constantly being moved around. It would make typing a very frustrating task. Keeping the symbols in a consistent place allows users to focus more on WHAT they want to say rather than HOW they are going to say it.

To introduce core vocabulary:
- ☑ MODEL, MODEL, MODEL
- ☑ Modeling means pairing the vocabulary on the display when you speak
- ☑ You don't need to model EVERY word you say
- ☑ For example, you might say, "Let's go to the park" but only model, "GO + PARK"
- ☑ Aim to model vocabulary hundreds of times throughout the day
- ☑ Expand on what the user says e.g. if they request: "book" you could model, "want + book"
- ☑ If the user communicates something nonverbally, model the symbol for what they communicated, e.g. if their cup is empty and they hold it up to you, model, "more + juice"

See page 2 for suggestions on core vocabulary to begin modeling. There are examples of how the same words can be used in multiple activities.

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Activity	One-Word	Two-Word	Three-Word	Four-Word
Games	"more"	"play more"	"you play more"	"You want play more"
	"that"	"what's that?"	"I need that"	"I need more that"
	"go"	"go more"	"you go more"	"you go more please"
	"stop"	"you stop"	"read more please"	to stop"
	"help"	"help me"	"you help me"	"help me do it"
	"turn"	"my turn"	"your turn go"	"your turn to go"
Reading	"read"	"read more"	"read with me"	"Come read with me"
	"more"	"want more	"I want more"	"I want read more"
	"turn"	"you turn"	"I turn it"	"you turn it please"
	"don't"	don't want"	"don't like that"	"I don't like that"
	"help"	"help me"	"help me read"	"help me read it"
	"stop"	"stop that"	"I want stop"	"I want to stop"
Going for a walk	"look"	"see that"	"I see that "	"I want to see that"
	"hear"	"hear that"	"I hear that"	"Did you hear that "
	"what"	"what that"	"what is that"	"What is that there"
	"that"	"like that"	"don't like that"	"I don't like that "
	"there"	"go there"	"I go there"	"I want to go there"
	"go"	"go in", "go out"	"Let's go in"	"Let's go in there"
Social	"come"	"come here"	"you come here"	"come here with me"
	"look"	"see it"	"come see this"	"come and see this"
	"go"	"time go"	"time to go"	"time to go in"
	"play"	"you play"	"play with me"	"you play with me"
	"more"	"have more"	"I have more"	"I want have more"
Meals	"more"	"more please"	"I want more"	"I want more please"
	"that"	"like that"	"I like that"	"I like more that"
	"go"	"go out"	"go out eat"	"go out to eat"
	"like"	"don't like"	"I don't like"	"I don't like it"
	"help"	"help me"	"help me make"	"help me make it"
	"need"	"need more"	"I need more"	"I need more drink"
Preferred activity	"time"	"more time"	"need more time"	"I need more time"
	"like"	"like it"	"I like it"	"I like do it"
	"need"	"want more"	"want more time"	"I want more time"
	"work"	"no work"	"no more work"	"no more work please"
	"play"	"you play"	"you play me"	"you play with me"
Songs/Music	"hear"	"I hear"	"I hear that"	"I do hear that"
	"like"	"I like"	"I like it"	"I like to hear"
	"more"	"play more"	"play more please"	"go play more please"
	"stop"	"stop it"	"stop play it"	"stop play it please"
	"fast"	"play fast"	"play it fast"	"play it more fast"
	"slow"	"play slow"	"play it slow"	"play it more fast"

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Moving away from labelling can be difficult but using core words can help the student learn language, concepts, and meaning that can be generalized to a variety of words and situations.

STATING FUNCTIONS
Stating functions allows a student to tell you what an object does and serves as a stepping stone toward defining words. You can ask questions such as;

- What do you do with your eyes?   "look"
- What do you do with juice?   "drink"
- What do you do with an apple?   "eat"
- What do you do when you are tired?   "sleep"

By teaching the student about what the object does we can help them associate the verb with the label.

ASSOCIATIONS
The ability to attach a related meaning to a word is important to building vocabulary. You can ask questions such as;
- "Who eats?"   "it does", "he does", "she does", "they do"
- "Who runs?"   "it does", "he does", "she does", "they do", "it does not"
- "Who sleeps?"   "it does", "he does", "she does", "they do"
- "Who is a baby?"   "he is", "she is", "they are"

This teaches a student based on past experiences to associate new concepts to an object or a situation.

SIMILARITIES
Asking a student to state similarities encourages a child to note the likeness between objects. You can ask questions such as;
- "How are bears and tigers the same?"
    - "they are big", "they are fast", "they want to eat you", "they like to eat", "they like to sleep", "they like to play", "they are not small"

DIFFERENCES
Stating differences encourages a student to think of two objects and note their contrasts. Questions to ask may include;
- "How are sharks and people different?"
    - Sharks- "it is big", "it is fast", "it can not drive", "it can not play computer", "it can not talk", "it can not read"
    - People- "he is small", "he is slow", "he can drive", "he can play computer", "he can talk/say", "he can read"

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DEFINITIONS

This task teaches the child to define a word. You can ask questions such as;

- "What is a bear?"   "it is big", "it is brown", "it eats fish", "it has four legs", "it lives with trees"
- What is a shark?   "it is big", it is white", "it eats fish", "it has no legs", "it lives in water"

Nouns are not the enemy, but you need to pick nouns that the student can use in a variety of contexts/environments. Having them learn things like Atlantic Ocean, Volcano, Gladiator, etc is not going to help them outside of the classroom. By using more generic nouns to help describe objects ("lives in water" versus "ocean") you are teaching not only the meaning of the word but a life skill.